United Nations CRC/C/SR.2260

# Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
26 January 2018

Original: English

**Committee on the Rights of the Child**
**Seventy-seventh session**

**Summary record of the 2260th meeting**
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 18 January 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Ms. Winter

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Seychelles*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties** (*continued*)

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Seychelles* (CRC/C/SYC/5-6; CRC/C/SYC/Q/5-6 and CRC/C/SYC/Q/5-6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Seychelles took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles), introducing the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Seychelles (CRC/C/SYC/5-6), said that her country remained firmly committed to the protection and promotion of children's rights and had worked hard to raise awareness of the Convention among the general public.

3. Great strides had been made in the field of early childhood care and education; as a result, Seychelles had been recognized by the International Bureau of Education as a regional leader in best practices in that field.

4. The Social Renaissance Action Plan had played an important role in keeping child-related issues on the national agenda. Steps had been taken to strengthen child protection, including the establishment of a dedicated child protection team within the police force. The principle of the best interests of the child was frequently invoked in decisions handed down by the Family Tribunal.

5. As indicated in paragraph 14 of her country's replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SYC/Q/5-6/Add.1), corporal punishment was now prohibited in schools. The provisions of the Children Act allowing the Minister for Family Affairs to issue regulations on the administration of corporal punishment in certain establishments had not yet been repealed; however, as the Minister in question, she was committed to ensuring that no such regulations would ever be issued.

6. In 2017, 9 per cent of the national budget had been allocated to the education sector. The duration of compulsory education had been increased to 11 years, and measures were being taken under the Education Sector Medium-Term Strategy 2013–2017 to improve the quality of education.

7. The Ministry of Family Affairs was developing a new strategic plan to address current challenges, such as the decline of the extended family, the rise in substance abuse and the effects of globalization on the family unit. Children's rights would remain high on its agenda.

8. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would like to know why the State party had not yet submitted initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

9. She asked what status the Convention held in national law; whether the delegation could provide examples of cases in which the Convention had been invoked before domestic courts; and what stage had been reached in the amendment of the Civil Status Act, with respect to the minimum age for marriage, and the Children Act, with respect to the prohibition of corporal punishment.

10. She asked what steps were being taken to provide the Social Affairs Department with sufficient human and financial resources and to combat burnout among social workers; how the work of the Social Affairs Department was coordinated with that of the National Commission for Child Protection; and whether the Commission played an advisory role only.

11. With reference to the evaluation of the 2005–2009 Plan of Action for Children, she enquired what the main outcomes of that evaluation had been and why the State party had decided not to adopt a new action plan. The Committee was concerned that child-related issues would not receive adequate attention under the Social Renaissance Action Plan.

12. She would appreciate more information on the budget allocated to programmes for children; the steps taken by the State party to prioritize children's rights in its budgeting, in

accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights; and any technical assistance received in that regard. She wondered what measures had been taken to combat corruption and prevent the misuse of funds allocated to programmes for children.

13. With reference to paragraphs 57 and 66 of the State party's report, she asked why the findings of the Child Well-being Survey had not been fully exploited by the relevant agencies; what steps would be taken to improve data collection; and whether the delegation could provide more information on the database on children.

14. She enquired what specific measures had been taken to strengthen the National Human Rights Commission; what stage had been reached in the review of its legislative framework; whether the Commission would serve as the independent mechanism responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention; whether it would be empowered to handle complaints of child rights violations; and whether there was an existing complaint mechanism for children.

15. It would be useful to know what steps had been taken to change social attitudes towards child marriage and how frequently child marriages took place. Lastly, she wondered what measures had been adopted to combat de jure and de facto discrimination; to what extent the best interests of the child were viewed not only as a principle, but also as a right and a rule of procedure; and whether the delegation could provide examples of legal decisions based on the best interests of the child.

16. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Rapporteur) said that she wished to commend the State party for promoting the participation of children in the public sphere through platforms such as the National Youth Assembly. She wondered whether support was provided to enable children to express themselves; whether the adults involved were trained to listen to children; and whether there were procedural guarantees to ensure that children's views were given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. She would also like information on measures taken to enable children in vulnerable situations, such as children with disabilities, to express their views.

17. The Government had previously stated that child participation was not compatible with the traditional approach to parenting; however, according to paragraph 111 of the State party's report, the 2011 Study on Families had revealed that family values were changing. With that in mind, she wondered whether the National Family Policy contained measures to encourage parents to create a supportive, participatory environment at home.

18. The traditional approach to parenting was contradictory to the spirit of the Convention and to the provisions of article 5 in particular, insofar as it prevented children from exercising certain rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression and access to information. She would like to know how the Government intended to address that contradiction, taking into account the findings of the 2011 Study on Families.

19. She wondered whether media outlets had been encouraged to adopt a code of conduct to ensure the protection of children's rights and whether steps had been taken to regulate children's access to information, especially online.

20. It would also be useful to know whether there were plans to enact legislation to ensure that all children born out of wedlock had the legal right to know and maintain contact with both their biological parents; what stage had been reached in the amendment of the Civil Code, including the removal of the term "illegitimate child"; and what measures had been taken to ensure effective access to registration and identity documents for child asylum seekers and refugees and their families.

21. In light of the concerns raised in the previous concluding observations (CRC/C/SYC/CO/2-4) about violations of children's rights arising from the business sector, particularly the tourism and fisheries industries, she asked whether the Government planned to introduce measures such as codes of conduct to prevent the economic exploitation of children and the worst forms of child labour. She would also appreciate information on any actions to combat problems such as water pollution and climate change, with a view to lessening environmental impacts on children's rights.

22. The Committee welcomed the progress made in policies and legislation to protect children from all forms of violence. It was interested to know how the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools would be implemented following the 2017 amendment to the Education Act. Did the State party plan to train teachers in other methods of disciplining children? Given that corporal punishment had not yet been banned in all settings, more information might be provided on efforts to repeal the right to administer "reasonable chastisement", as provided for in the Children Act. The Committee would be grateful for details concerning efforts to raise awareness of parents and society more generally of positive parenting and to provide training in that regard. It would be helpful to know whether the judiciary might provide an authoritative interpretation of the law along the lines of the recent judgment of the High Court of South Africa, which had found that "reasonable chastisement" was unconstitutional and should not be applied.

23. Further information was needed on measures taken to prevent sexual abuse of children within the family, including data on the number of cases reported to the police child protection team set up in 2015, the number of cases prosecuted and the number of abusers punished. She also wished to know more about the helpline service, including whether it was for children only, how frequently calls were received, how accessible it was for children from the various islands, and whether it was toll-free and open 24 hours a day. Were NGOs involved in administering the helpline, and what kind of support did it provide to children? Lastly, she asked what services were available to victims of abuse for their recovery and reintegration.

24. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi**, regretting the absence of a shadow report, asked how the State party had collaborated with civil society, including children, in the preparation of its periodic report. She was curious to know what steps had been planned or taken to ensure that the activities of NGOs, especially those involved in the care of vulnerable children, complied with international child protection standards. How transparent was the allocation of State funding to NGOs?

25. While she was gratified that the Convention was the most widely known human rights instrument in Seychelles, she wondered what human rights training was provided to professionals who worked with vulnerable children, such as children with disabilities and children deprived of their liberty. What had been the impact of awareness-raising measures among children and professionals?

*The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.*

26. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that the role of the National Commission for Child Protection was to coordinate all stakeholders, to propose policies and to advise the Government on child protection matters. As a high-level authority made up of representatives of child protection organizations, the Commission played a key role in promoting the Convention, supporting the advancement of children's rights and engaging in dialogue on children's rights with various actors. Other coordinating structures composed of representatives from different sectors included the Inter-Agency Committee, which addressed cases of sexual abuse and other forms of serious abuse against children, and the Social Services Committee, which submitted reports and recommendations to the courts and the Family Tribunal in cases of custody, access, compulsory care, child maintenance, adoption and guardianship.

27. A variety of parenting programmes were provided by NGOs, the National Council for Children and the Social Affairs Department. An antenatal parenting programme introduced in 2013 to lay a solid foundation for the future of children, families and communities had been extended in 2015 so as to provide continued support to parents after childbirth. Such programmes aimed to equip parents with the skills to provide a stable and nurturing environment and were designed to reach as many people as possible, based on their needs. The National Council for Children operated a long-standing positive parenting programme whose components included discipline, anger management, communication, children's rights, dealing with challenging behaviour and budgeting.

28. The Government operated a 24-hour, toll-free helpline that was designed solely for the purpose of child protection and was staffed by social workers. In 2017, the line had received 259 calls, a marked decrease on the 339 calls received in 2016. The Government

was conscious of the need to increase the helpline's visibility and use and it had decided to renew its sensitization strategies, including through the distribution of leaflets and posters to all schools. Complaints of abuse were investigated jointly by the police and social services. Victim support services were guided by the Working Together Manual for Child Protection.

29. The Government supported training for social workers through collaboration with the National Institute of Health and Social Studies and the University of Seychelles. Efforts to support and retain social workers included the ongoing revision of their conditions of service, for which resources had been allocated in the 2018 budget, as well as the current institutional emphasis on professional development and supervision.

30. The minimum age for marriage was set forth in the Civil Status Act, which was still under review by the Ministry of Employment, Immigration and Civil Status. Statistics showed that marriages of girls under the age of 18 years were extremely rare, while in the previous 20 years there had been no cases of ministerial consent being provided to males under the age of 18 or females under the age of 15. In her personal capacity as Minister for Family Affairs, she pledged not to give consent to any such marriages and to push for a change in the law.

31. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles) said that, since ratifying the Convention, the Government of Seychelles had always maintained plans to address concerns relating to children. The Social Renaissance National Action Plan (2011–2016), which had replaced the National Plan of Action for Children (2005–2009), focused on children, families and communities and included measures to raise social awareness and to support at-risk groups and victims. Following an evaluation of the Social Renaissance National Action Plan, the Government had formulated new policies and introduced new services and programmes designed to tackle the problems identified, and inter-institutional coordination had been strengthened. A new plan of action on the family would be introduced for the period 2018–2022.

32. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the collection of reliable data was a persistent challenge that the Government was trying to address through various strategies. For example, the Social Affairs Department was developing a data collection and management system for children that was expected to become operational during the following year.

33. Regarding possible amendments to the Children Act and the Civil Code, a committee was conducting a section-by-section review of the Civil Code and was expected to report its findings shortly. As part of its involvement in that process, the Social Affairs Department advocated the removal of all discriminatory terms, including the frequent references to "illegitimate" children.

34. She was pleased to inform the Committee that the Government had commenced work on a code of conduct for the media and that a policy to safeguard the privacy of children in alternative care institutions had been approved. The delegation appreciated the recommendation to work with the United Nations Children's Fund and expressed the hope that the provision of technical support would lead to improvements in the child protection system.

35. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that calculating the State's budgetary investment in children remained a challenge. The bulk of the national budget was allocated to the education and health sectors so as to provide free education and primary health care to citizens, as the Constitution required. However, it was possible to identify budgetary allocations to institutions whose work was entirely directed at children, such as the National Council for Children, which had received a budget of about US$ 320,000 in 2017, and the Institute of Early Childhood Development, which had received a budget of about US$ 556,800 in 2017. Moreover, the Government ensured that special projects and programmes for children received adequate funding: the Social Renaissance National Action Plan had been allocated US$ 77,000 per year since 2011. In 2013, the Government had introduced the Trust Fund for Early Childhood Care and Education, which received US$ 77,000 from the national budget each year in addition to contributions from businesses engaging in corporate social responsibility. Government departments and NGOs were able to apply to the Trust Fund to secure funding for projects aimed at young children.

36. Teachers in schools had been sensitized to the ban on corporal punishment; any teacher inflicting such punishment would be prosecuted. Parents had also been sensitized and had received training in disciplining children through alternatives to physical force, although much work remained to be done in that area.

37. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles), responding to the concern raised about sexual abuse in the home, said that the Government was implementing several programmes to educate the public about domestic violence. In schools, through personal, social and civic education classes, children were taught about their rights to protection and how to recognize and report issues of sexual abuse. The Government placed strong emphasis on building the capacity of child-protection and law-enforcement professionals and constantly strove to educate families, parents and other caregivers with a view to preventing sexual abuse in the home.

38. Lastly, regarding the paternity of children of single mothers, she said that the Government had noted a sharp decrease in the number of cases of fathers who refused to legally acknowledge their children after birth. In such cases, the authorities made an effort to ensure that the children of single mothers were able to know the father's identity.

39. **Ms. Todorova** said that she would welcome clarification on whether mothers or children were able to institute legal proceedings under the Civil Code to establish parentage.

40. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles) said that legislation allowed mothers to bring proceedings to establish paternity. While there had been no cases of children bringing proceedings for that purpose, she believed that the conditions were in place for the authorities to assist children in doing so, should the situation arise.

41. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the outstanding reports under the two Optional Protocols to the Convention referred to earlier would be prepared and submitted as soon as possible. Concerning corruption, mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that the problem was dealt with appropriately. Under the 2016 Anti-Corruption Act, an independent anti-corruption commission had been set up with the mandate to receive and investigate complaints. The Ethics Commission, which had been operating for several years, carried out education and sensitization activities on corruption; it had drawn up a general code of conduct and operated a system for the declaration of assets by public officials. The principle of the best interests of the child was a primary consideration in all decisions by social services, for example in developing individual care plans for children. There had been a significant improvement in the decisions of the Family Tribunal since the new board had been installed; in 2017, only 2 of the 13 judgments issued had failed to mention the best interests of the child. The pastoral care system for primary and secondary schools also emphasized the best interests of the child and placed children at the centre of school development initiatives.

42. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she would be interested to hear more about the horizontal and cross-cutting coordination of the activities of the National Commission for Child Protection and other mechanisms working in that area. She would like to know how many social workers staffed the government helpline. She wondered whether the Government relied on the Committee's concluding observations in designing policies on issues such as data collection and child-responsive budgeting. The delegation might indicate how many corruption cases had been brought before courts and their outcome. She wondered whether any studies had been carried out to assess the scale of sexual violence against children.

43. **Mr. Gastaud** said that he would be interested to know about the criminal provisions in place in respect of corruption. Did the Anti-Corruption Commission refer cases to the courts following investigation?

44. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles) said that the Social Affairs Department in the Ministry of Family Affairs had a mandate to coordinate all child protection issues. The Ministry was the parent ministry responsible for implementation of the Children Act. The various committees across sectors working on child protection issues reported to the high-level National Commission for Child Protection, which in turn could inform the Government of any policy or legislative changes required. The helpline operated seven days

a week and was staffed by in-service social workers based on a roster. For calls received during the night, depending on the nature of the case reported, follow-up action could be initiated immediately or the following day. A study had not yet been carried out on the extent of sexual violence against children specifically. It would be necessary to consider how best to raise the funds to conduct such a study.

45. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the Anti-Corruption Act provided for legal avenues for dealing with corruption cases, but as the Anti-Corruption Commission had been established only very recently, it had not yet referred any cases to the courts.

46. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she would like the delegation to comment on reports of young girls living and having children with older men outside marriage. She would be interested to know whether teenage girls who fell pregnant were able to continue their education.

47. **Ms. Simeon** (Seychelles) said that, under the Ministry of Education's teenage pregnancy policy, girls who fell pregnant could continue their education once they had given birth; they received all the necessary support from the Social Affairs Department. The delegation was not aware of cases of young girls living with older men but would look into the matter.

48. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the Government had a good working relationship with civil society, particularly when it came to children's affairs, and civil society organizations had participated in the process of compiling the State party report. There was also civil society representation on the National Commission for Child Protection, which helped in sharing information with other NGOs that were members of the civil society platform. Children had been included in the process of validating the State party report, but it was acknowledged that perhaps further efforts could be made in that regard. The report was publicized and made available online. In terms of NGO funding, each year the Government allocated a certain amount of money to a fund that could be accessed by NGOs to finance projects that supported the Government's work. Some NGOs might benefit from direct Government funding if their services were required in a particular area.

49. **Mr. Gastaud** asked whether NGOs were entitled to receive foreign funding and whether the Government delegated the provision of certain State services to NGOs.

50. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that many NGOs received funding from international donors and some ran services on behalf of the Government.

51. **Ms. Todorova** said that it was not clear why NGOs required foreign funding given that Seychelles was now classified as a high-income country; surely the Government should be providing the funding for the implementation of its own policies.

52. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that, although Seychelles had graduated to high-income status, some foreign donors recognized that challenges continued to be faced in certain areas and provided support to tackle them.

53. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she would like to know what mechanisms were in place to ensure accountability and compliance with the relevant standards when government services were delegated to NGOs.

54. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles) said that NGOs that received Government funding for the provision of services to adolescents and children had a reporting obligation; there was regular monitoring to ensure that funding was being spent appropriately and that there were no violations of children's rights.

55. **Ms. Marguerite** (Seychelles) said that the Protection of Human Rights Act 2009 made provision for the appointment of the chairperson and members of the National Human Rights Commission by the President in consultation with the Chief Justice and the speaker of the National Assembly. A review of the legislation and policies governing the Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman was ongoing with a view to strengthening the institutions and ensuring compliance with the Paris Principles. Although the Commission had been in place since 2009, it was not well known among the general public. However, there were other, more popular, avenues for complaints for children. For example,

the National Council for Children gave a voice to children, listened to their concerns and made referrals to other institutions where relevant. There were also complaints mechanisms in place in the Ministry of Education. There was no record of child labour in Seychelles; the Ministry of Employment's inspection unit played a key role in ensuring compliance with legislative provisions as they related to children. There were many structures in place to promote the participation of children and ensure that their views were heard, such as the Seychelles National Youth Council, but more work remained to be done in that area.

56. **Ms. Todorova**, noting that there was clearly a persistent problem of children not being respected as rights holders in the family, as reflected in reports that children were not even allowed to choose their own clothes, said that she would like to know what measures were planned to remedy that situation.

57. **Ms. William-Melanie** (Seychelles) said that it was true that, traditionally, parents had always been seen as responsible for making decisions for their children; however, efforts were being made to change that mentality through a positive parenting approach, with an emphasis on the need for children to be better heard by their parents. It was an ongoing process, however, and the transition would take time. As to reports that children were not allowed to choose their clothes, perhaps that was the case among very young children, but older children were allowed to express their preference.

58. The Government was making ongoing efforts to include children in debates and discussions on climate change. Their inclusion in those debates and discussions was facilitated by the many various environmental clubs in the country's schools. Answers to the questions about asylum-seeking children and migrant workers would be provided if the information requested by the Committee could be obtained from the relevant agencies.

59. **Mr. Gastaud** said that, while he welcomed children's participation in activities related to climate change, he wondered whether climate change was included in school curricula, whether facilities were built to resist extreme weather events and whether Seychelles had an adequate number of shelters.

60. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that her earlier question had concerned not girls who lived with married men or forced marriage but girls who cohabitated with men. She wondered whether the authorities were aware of the phenomenon and what measures, if any, it took to combat it. It would be interesting to know how many girls had returned to school after giving birth.

61. **Ms. Todorova** said that the Committee welcomed the State party's focus on ensuring that families fulfilled their responsibilities. The Committee was nonetheless of the view that children had needs and rights that were not a matter for the family alone. In addition, the Committee was troubled by the State party's failure to act on recommendations made by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to amend its Civil Code with a view to granting mothers and fathers equal status under the law (CEDAW/C/SYC/CO/1-5, para. 39). She wished to know why those recommended amendments had not been made.

62. She asked whether the licensing of non-governmental and other providers of alternative care for children deprived of a family environment was regulated and, if so, how. In the same connection, she wondered how the authorities monitored the standards of care in the children's homes owned by the Catholic Church, how decisions to place children in those homes were made and whether those decisions were driven in part by the poverty of the families whose children were removed from their care. She would welcome a comment on the difficulties faced by the State party in its attempts to develop a system of foster care. An indication of whether there were community-based services for children with behavioural problems, whom the authorities seemed all too ready to place in institutions, would likewise be welcome. The delegation might indicate whether any measures had been taken to return institutionalized children to their biological families.

63. She asked whether there were children in need of adoption in Seychelles and whether there were prospective parents willing to adopt them. In that connection, she requested a comment on the amendments being drafted to incorporate into domestic law the

Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.

64. With regard to the National Framework on Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth, currently being developed, she asked what was meant by "vulnerable children" and how many such children there were. It would also be interesting to know whether the Government was of the view that asylum-seeking, refugee and stateless children were sufficiently protected under national law.

65. The legislative steps taken to combat child labour in the State party were commendable. She nonetheless wondered whether the amendments to the Employment Act that were currently awaiting adoption included a more specific list of the hazardous jobs that children were not allowed to do and a provision explicitly making 18 the minimum age for hazardous work. In addition, she asked whether involving children in the production and sale of illegal drugs had been made a specific criminal offence, whether consideration had been given to raising the minimum age for light work to 13, whether reports of child and forced labour in the tourism, fishing, construction and informal sectors had been investigated and, if so, how many investigations had been conducted.

66. It would be interesting to know whether the number of labour inspectors and the resources at their disposal were sufficient for the enforcement of the State party's laws on child labour. In view of reports received by the Committee, she wondered whether it was really true that there was no child labour in Seychelles. She also wondered whether the Government had plans to make labour less attractive to children and their families by improving the country's schools and providing additional incentives to pursue an education.

67. Although the criminalization of the sexual exploitation and prostitution of children was a commendable development, the Committee was concerned by reports that children in Seychelles, mostly girls, were induced into prostitution by peers, family members and pimps. She asked what the Government was doing to address that and other related issues. In the same connection, she wondered whether law enforcement and judicial officials had received the training they needed to address those issues effectively, as prosecutions of persons accused of securing the sexual services of children were uncommon. A comment on the measures the Government had taken to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including by reaching out to their parents and the general public, would be welcome. An indication of the number of cases of such exploitation that had been prosecuted during the reporting period and the number of convictions that had been secured would also be welcome. In addition, the delegation might indicate what recovery and rehabilitation services were available to victims.

68. She wished to know how many cases of human trafficking, in particular for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation, had been identified and whether any accused traffickers had been prosecuted. Similarly, she wondered whether there were services for victims of human trafficking and, if so, how such victims were referred to service providers. Was the private sector, the tourism industry in particular, encouraged to do its part to contribute to reducing demand for the sexual services of minors?

69. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she wished to know what resources had been set aside for the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy recently developed by Seychelles and how many children with disabilities had benefited from it. With regard to basic health, she would welcome an indication of the number of doctors per capita in the State party, the rates at which children were vaccinated against common childhood diseases, the number of children affected by HIV/AIDS and the impact of the National AIDS Council Act of 2013. It would also be interesting to know whether access to safe abortions was widely available. In the same vein, she wondered whether girls went without sexual and reproductive health services for fear that doctors and other medical personnel, as required by law, would seek the authorization of their parents to provide the health services they were asked for. In addition, she asked whether the causes of suicide among the State party's children had been studied, what measures, if any, had been taken to prevent it and what efforts had been made to ensure that economically disadvantaged families had access to basic social services.

70. Regarding education, she would welcome an indication of the impact of the measures that had been taken to combat absenteeism and discourage school dropout. In

addition, she asked whether the State party had considered taking measures to encourage girls to study subjects traditionally intended for boys. She also asked whether the action plan associated with the Inclusive Education Policy had been launched and whether all children, including children with disabilities and children in conflict with the law, had access to recreational and cultural activities.

71. In connection with sexual exploitation, she wondered why the State party had not developed a code of conduct for tourism professionals, whether child victims of sexual exploitation had access to confidential complaints mechanisms and whether there were protocols for the referral and care of such victims. Lastly, she wished to know how many psychiatrists, including child psychiatrists, there were in the State party.

72. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she would welcome an indication of the current percentage of children living in poverty in the State party. It would be interesting to know whether the measures taken by the State party to fight poverty had been successful.

73. **Mr. Rodriguez Reyes** asked whether the State party had any current child nutrition policies that promoted exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child's life. He wondered whether the State party monitored the activities of the companies that produced and distributed breast-milk substitutes and whether any additional hospitals had earned the "baby-friendly" accreditation since the State party had submitted its periodic report in mid-2016. Lastly, he asked what measures had been taken to ensure that economically disadvantaged children and their families benefited from social security, including social insurance.

74. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she wished to know whether there were mental health services for girls who were victims of sexual violence. She would welcome a comment on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the State party. It would be interesting to learn what, if anything, was done to prevent transmission of the virus from mother to child.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*